

Graduation Flexibility FAQ

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Q1: Which students may be awarded an Indiana diploma using the flexibility provided for in the policy document adopted on April 2, 2020, in response to Executive Order 20-16?

A: Students in the 2020 graduation cohort that were on track to graduate prior to the closure of Indiana's schools on March 19, 2020, may be awarded an Indiana diploma with the appropriate designation that the student was on track to earn using the flexibility provided for in the policy document.

Q2: If seniors have the combination of earned credits and enrolled courses, are they done for the year?

A: The Executive Order states that students must participate in the learning opportunities their school is offering through the end of the year (160 days). The level and definition of participation is defined by the local school. These students are still subject to the requirements in Executive Order 20-16 of a minimum of 160 instructional days.

Q3: What does it mean for a student to be on track to graduate prior to March 19, 2020?

A: A student was on track to graduate prior to March 19, 2020, if (1) the credits the student earned prior to March 19, 2020; and (2) the credits the student would have earned for the courses in which the student was enrolled on March 19, 2020, taken together, satisfy the course and credit requirements for an Indiana diploma with the appropriate designation. On track would include students who would have earned the diploma by September 30, 2020.

Q4: Are there restrictions to the number or type of courses that can be counted towards a diploma without a student having earned the credit?

A: While a school may only count courses in which a student was enrolled on March 19, 2020, towards the course and credit requirements for an Indiana diploma with a Core 40 designation, a Core 40 with Academic Honors/Technical Honors designation, or a General designation, there are no restrictions on the total number of courses that may be counted. The course titles must align to the diploma designation requirements the student is on track to receive.

Q5: How should schools document the incomplete courses that contribute to a student's diploma but where a credit was not earned?

A: The Indiana Commission for Higher Education is working with its higher education partners, the Indiana Department of Education, and Indiana's e-Transcript provider to develop an accurate and fair way of capturing student progress in courses disrupted due to COVID-19. Additional guidance will be provided on this issue. For now, school corporations are encouraged to continue

offering eLearning or expanded learning to the maximum extent possible so students are able to complete courses and earn credits.

Q6: How should schools determine whether to award a credit for a course that was not completed prior to the school closures on March 19, 2020?

A: School corporations that continue to offer eLearning or expanded learning opportunities for students may assign a grade and award a credit for a course that was not completed prior to March 19, 2020, if the school corporation determines that a student has demonstrated proficiency against the academic standards in that course as outlined in 511 IAC 6-7.1-1(d).

Q6: How should we handle dual credit courses?

A. If a school is able to continue learning and meet the requirements of the postsecondary institution offering the dual credit, students will be able to receive the dual credit.

Q7: How should grades be assigned for courses that were not completed prior to the school closures on March 19, 2020?

A: Grading policies are determined by local school corporations; however, students should be given every opportunity possible to achieve a grade designation that reflects a full year's worth of work, and challenges associated with access to eLearning should not negatively impact a student's grade.

Q8: Can we assign pass/fail grades to students instead of letter grades.

A: For transcribed high school courses, the issuance of pass/fail grades may cause issues for students when it comes to meeting some graduation requirements. For the reasons outlined below, it is the position of the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) that pass/fail grading may not be used for courses necessary to attain an Indiana diploma.

Academic Honors and Technical Honors diploma designations require students to earn a letter grade of "C" or higher in certain classes AND maintain a cumulative grade point average of "B" in all courses. Thus, the issuance of pass/fail grades would make it impossible for students to meet these graduation requirements. As such, if pass/fail grades were issued, students in grades 9-11 would be ineligible for Academic Honors and Technical Honors. Additionally, the Commission for Higher Education supports maintaining the rigors of the Academic Honors and Technical Honors diploma designations.

Graduation waivers require students to have a "C" average in courses required for graduation in order to be eligible for a waiver. Thus, as a letter grade average is statutorily required this would preclude the use of pass/fail grades if students in grades 9-11 want to be considered for a waiver, from either the Graduation Qualifying Exam or Graduation Pathways, in the future.

The issuance of pass/fail grades may also adversely impact a student when applying for college if there is a prerequisite of certain letter grades in particular courses. Additionally, current NCAA eligibility guidelines require that a grade of “pass” be calculated in a student’s GPA as the lowest grade the school issues. For most schools, this would mean that a grade of “pass” would be calculated as a “D,” negatively impacting a student’s GPA.

Finally, IHSAA Rule 18-1 requires students to be enrolled in a certain number of classes, passing at least 70 percent of the classes. The language of the rule discusses grades and credit requirements. Allowing a pass/fail grade could potentially impact student eligibility for participation in high school sports.

Q9: Do 5th year graduates who would have earned a diploma at the end of the 2019/2020 school year qualify for this additional flexibility?

A: No. *The current flexibility only applies to students in the 2020 graduation cohort. Students who are members of the 2019 graduation cohort or an earlier cohort must successfully complete the high school graduation requirements set forth in IC 20-32-4-1.5 and 511 IAC 6-7.1*

Q10: Are juniors who intended to graduate after 3 years qualify for this additional flexibility?

A: No. *The current flexibility only applies to students in the 2020 graduation cohort. Students who are members of the 2021 graduation cohort must successfully complete the high school graduation requirements set forth in IC 20-32-4-1.5 and 511 IAC 6-7.1*

Q11: What happens to students in grades 9-11 whose classes were interrupted?

A: *Additional guidance will be released on how schools can support students in grades nine-11 whose high school trajectory was interrupted by school closures due to COVID-19. This flexibility does not apply to students in grades nine-11, and those students will be expected to meet the graduation requirements set forth in IC 20-32-4-1.5 and 511 IAC 6-7.1. Schools are encouraged to continue remote learning in such a way to allow students in these grades to complete courses and earn credits. Please see guidance on grading in Question eight.*

Q12: Do seniors have to pass the ISTEP 10 assessment or complete a graduation pathway?

A: No. *Due to the cancellation of statewide testing, some seniors may have missed out on the opportunity to achieve the required passing score on the ISTEP 10 assessment. As a result, the testing requirements in place for graduation waivers have been waived for students in the 2020 cohort that are on track to graduate.*

Q13: Will colleges still accept a student that does not earn all of the credits required for an Indiana diploma?

A: *Most Indiana colleges made admission decisions for Fall 2020 based on Fall 2019 high school grades and student applications. That said, the Indiana Commission for Higher Education is*

working with its higher education partners, the Indiana Department of Education and the state's e-Transcript provider to ensure student transcripts accurately reflect the unique situations caused by COVID-19 for the 2020 high school graduating class. This type of information can help postsecondary institutions determine the best supports these students may need to be ready for success in college-level work. More guidance will be available soon for schools and families.

Q14: Can students still earn high school credits during the remainder of the school year.

A: Yes. *Schools are required to provide instruction, pursuant to Executive Order 20-16, via remote learning to all students, including seniors, for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. This includes students who fall short of the course and credit requirements even with this additional flexibility so they may earn the credits needed to graduate on time.*

Q15: Does this flexibility apply to adult high schools serving students pursuing their high school diplomas?

A: No. *The additional flexibility applies only to the 2020 graduation cohort. Students from previous cohorts who were on track to graduate this spring must still complete all of the required courses and earn all of the required credits from their cohort year or from 2020 to receive an Indiana diploma.*

HONORS & TECHNICAL HONORS DESIGNATION

Q16: How do we determine if a student was on track for an honors or technical honors designation?

A: *The determination of whether a student was on track to meet one of the additional requirements for an honors or technical honors designation is left up to each local school corporation. School corporations are encouraged to adopt a rigorous criteria that is both equitable (meaning student demographics or characteristics do not influence one's ability to achieve the criteria) and ensures students do not miss out on earning this designation solely due to school closures in response to the COVID-19.*

Schools are encouraged to continue offering instruction so that students are able to achieve one of the additional requirements in order to earn an honors or technical honors designation.

Some example criteria that may be used for each of the requirements include:

HONORS

A. Advanced Placement: *The student earned or was enrolled to complete their second course and fourth credit as of March 19, 2020 and participates in the assessment online unless the student receives a waiver from their instructor due to limited access to online learning.*

B. Dual Credit: *The student earned or was enrolled to complete a total of six transcribed college credits from the approved dual credit list as of March 19, 2020; and, the instructor*

for each class that was disrupted by school closure signs off that the student does not have the opportunity to complete the course and earn the credit due to the statewide school closure.

- C. Combination of AP, Dual Credit, and IB:** *The student earned or was on track to earn the required combination of AP, dual credit, or IB credits as of March 19, and meet the additional requirements for each option outlined in the other sections of these criteria.*
- D. SAT:** *The student has attempted the SAT or ACT at least once prior to the school closures on March 19 and reached the college ready benchmark established by College Board in both Math (530) and Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (480). Students can also take the test at a future date.*
- E. ACT:** *The ACT had national testing dates on February 8, 2020 and rescheduled their April 4 assessment for June 13, 2020. Given these assessment dates provide the same number of opportunities to take the assessment, no additional flexibility will be granted for students looking to achieve the ACT benchmark score of 26 or higher. If the June 3 assessment date is cancelled or disrupted in any way, a student may be considered on track to meet this requirement if he or she had previously taken the ACT assessment and earned the college readiness benchmarks in Math (22), English (18), and Reading (22). Students can also take the test at a future date.*
- F. International Baccalaureate:** *The student earned or was on track to earn four International Baccalaureate (IB) credits and take the corresponding exams as of March 19, 2020; and, the instructor for the IB course signs off that the student was unable to complete any remaining coursework due to the statewide school closure.*

TECHNICAL HONORS

- B. WorkKeys:** *Given there is more flexibility with assessment dates and locations, schools may consider offering no additional flexibility for students who plan to earn a technical honors designation by achieving a qualifying score on the WorkKeys assessment unless there is no possible way a student is able to take the assessment prior to graduation.*
- C. Accuplacer:** *College Board has worked with Examity to offer the Accuplacer Assessment online, therefore no additional flexibility is provided for students who plan to earn their technical honors designation through achieving a qualifying score on the Accuplacer Assessment.*
- D. Compass Assessment:** *The Compass Assessment was phased out in 2015 and therefore few students should plan to earn a technical honors designation through this option. Students who do should be encouraged to explore the Accuplacer or WorkKeys options offered online.*



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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Working Together for Student Success

GENERAL DIPLOMA

Q17: If a school principal or counselor has met with a student or family to discuss the general diploma track prior to March 19, is an additional meeting required?

A: No. *Additional meetings would not be necessary. The additional flexibility to host the required meeting telephonically, via web conference, or through email only applies to those students for whom a meeting has not yet occurred.*